Administrative Procedure 133

SCHOOL/FACILITY CLOSURE DUE TO HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS

Background

The District strives to keep schools and facilities open whenever it is safe to do so. Extreme weather events or other hazardous conditions may require the temporary closure of one or more school or facilities to protect the wellbeing of students, staff, families and other members of the school community. The superintendent or designate has ultimate authority for these decisions, assesses each occurrence and determines the appropriate response, balancing safety and continuity of student learning. The decision to temporarily close a school or facility is not taken lightly and is the result of a careful assessment that is reviewed after each experience and refined if necessary.

The superintendent or designate will assess each occurrence of extreme weather or of a hazardous situation as it occurs, and initiate the appropriate actions as set out in this procedure.

Definitions

School Closure Day: A day in which all or selected schools/programs are closed for students and school-based staff.

Suspension of Classes: Classes are cancelled after the school day has started, with the building potentially remaining open for supervision.

Hazardous Conditions: Extreme weather (snow, ice, extreme cold or heat, windstorms, freezing rain), infrastructure failures (loss of heat, power, water), or environmental hazards such as smoke or air quality.

1. Decision making authority

The superintendent or designate will make the final decision regarding the school closure for a school day due to hazardous conditions and shall make the final decision on the suspension of classes after the start of any school day.

2. Communication in the event of a school/facility closure due to hazardous conditions:

2.1 The superintendent or designate shall make announcements about school closures, including cancellation of bus transportation as well as the resumption of classes through approved District communications channels:

- The VSB website
- Individual school websites
- Social media channels

2.2 The superintendent's office or designate shall communicate to impacted employees and notify employee stakeholder groups.

3. Operational planning and review

3.1 Annual communication

3.1.1 Information for students, families and the public on these procedures is posted on the district website and will be shared directly with every family in the fall of each year, through the superintendent's office or designate.

3.1.2 The executive director of employee services or designate will ensure these procedures are communicated to all district staff on an annual basis.

3.2 The leaders of business operations departments will:

3.2.1 Review and update their closure plans in alignment with this administrative procedure as necessary on an annual basis and communicate them to their staff.

3.3 Principals/vice principals will:

3.3.1 Review and update their plans for school closure annually in alignment with this procedure and communicate the plan to staff, PAC and their school community.

3.3.2 Notify parents/guardians they can decide to keep their student at home should the weather or other conditions on any day, they believe conditions are unsafe. This message shall be shared in newsletters/emails and through school social media and school websites periodically throughout the school year and include reminders on the process to notify the school when their child will be absent.

4. During a School Closure Day

4.1 Schools are closed to students and school-based staff, except those noted below.

4.2 Principals, vice principals, building engineers and maintenance leaders are expected to make every reasonable effort to report to work. If they are unable to report to work, they must report their absence in the District automated absence entry and dispatch system and contact their immediate supervisor.

4.3 All other employees whose regular work site is not a school will work either in person or remotely, as set out in the annual closure plan developed by their supervisor. This arrangement is subject to supervisor approval on the day of the closure. Those employees who are unable to work must report their absence in the District automated absence entry and dispatch system and contact their immediate supervisor.

5. **Safe Supervision Protocols**

5.1 During a school closure day principals/vice principals must ensure:

5.1.1 School closure signage is posted at all entrances.

5.1.2 There is a plan to safely supervise students who arrive at school, unaware of a closure, while staff contact parents/guardians for immediate pick-up including use of verification/emergency contact information.

5.2 In the case of a suspension of classes, principals/vice-principals must ensure:

5.2.1 Clear procedures are in place for the safe release of students if classes are cancelled after the start of the school day, including use of verification/emergency contact information.

5.2.2 Staff protocols are in place for managing students who must remain at school until picked up or safely dismissed**.**

6. Days that are not school closure days

6.1 On all other designated workdays, that have not been declared a school closure day, staff are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend their place of work. If unable to attend work due to inclement weather, hazardous conditions or for any other reason, employees are to report their absence in the District automated absence entry and dispatch system and contact their immediate supervisor.

6.2 At the discretion of the superintendent or designate, on a day when classes have been suspended after the start of the school day, staff members may be released prior to the end of the workday.

Legal Reference:	Section 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act; School Regulation 265/89
Adopted:	October 18, 1982
Revised:	August 1, 1990; September 1994; January 1999; September 24, 2018, October 29, 2026